

CIA Delays Printing of Ex-Aide's Book

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The Central Intelligence Agency has effectively delayed publication of a book by a former CIA operative by invoking a secrecy agreement it said was too secret to provide to the author.

The former CIA operative, Wilbur Eveland, says the CIA has also asserted the right to censor portions of his book dealing with events that took place before the agreement was supposedly signed.

The CIA's insistence on prepublication review involves a book entitled "Ropes of Sand—America's Failure in the Middle East," an autobiographical account by Eveland who says he served as the late CIA director Allen Dulles' principal representative in the Middle East in the late 1950s.

The book was to be published by W.W. Norton & Co. on May 19, but the printing of it, which had just started, was halted two weeks ago when Eveland said he belatedly received a demand from the CIA for prepublication review.

Meanwhile, galley copies of the book had already been sent out to book reviewers and, others, and an initial review appears in this week's issue of Publisher's Weekly. It calls the book "hard hitting and opinionated" and predicts that it "will prove controversial."

CIA spokesman Herbert Hetu said yesterday that the agency did not insist on changing Norton's publication schedule, but it is insisting on the right to review the portions of the book dealing with the CIA.

"We review transcripts for classi-

fied information," he said, "but we don't take out anything critical of the agency just because it's critical." Hetu, who is chairman of the CIA's Publication Review Board, said it has reviewed 198 manuscripts in the past three years and "we disapproved of only three. In the others, we asked for

with Britain's secret intelligence service, MI-6.

All this and more took place before September 1957, which Eveland says is the earliest date he could have signed any contract or secrecy agreement with the CIA.

Detached from the National Security Council staff at the White House

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changes, but we negotiated successfully."

Highly critical of the CIA's preoccupation with covert actions and its ham-handed implementation of a number of them, the book chronicles Eveland's work in Syria and other countries after he was sent to Damascus in 1955 to help "stem the leftist drift" in Syria and eventually attempt an abortive coup there.

Along the way, it cites the CIA's method in those days of devising pseudonyms (plucking a name at random from old telephone directories from the Australian outback), its use of a number of American corporations to provide "cover" for its agents, and its sometimes uneasy relationships

in 1955 at the behest of Allen Dulles, Eveland said his connections with the CIA were always "informal," that he never actually joined the agency, and that he cannot recall ever signing any promise to submit his writings to the CIA. He said he has been trying for almost four years, under the Freedom of Information Act, to obtain the copies of any contracts he signed with the CIA, but has so far succeeded only in getting a list of dates.

Apprehensive because of the Supreme Court's Feb. 19 decision expanding the CIA's censorship powers, Eveland brought the book to the agency's attention in a Feb. 29 mailgram and once again asked for copies of

any written commitments he had made.

He said he was told by CIA assistant general counsel John F. Payton in a letter he received on March 20:

"Writings of this nature must be reviewed by the CIA's Publication Review Board in accordance with the secrecy agreements (sic) which you signed. Because the secrecy agreement (sic) is contained in a document which is currently properly classified, I am not at liberty at this time to forward it to you."

Eveland said Payton subsequently told him in a phone conversation that the CIA "had a right to review anything I say about the CIA or intelligence" regardless of the dates, but CIA officials were somewhat ambivalent about that point yesterday.

In any case, Eveland said he told his publishers yesterday to send the CIA just those portions of the book "dealing with events from September 1957 onward," less than a third of the book. All the "hanky panky" took place before that, he said.

"I started in the intelligence business in 1941" with the army, Eveland protested. "I told him (Payton) I'm sure as hell not going to let you get into anything before I signed the agreement."

Hetu said yesterday the CIA is now in the process of declassifying relevant portions of whatever he did sign. (The overall contract, presumably listing what Eveland was to do in the Middle East, is apparently still considered too sensitive.)

"He (Eveland) was with us in a very specialized way," Hetu said. "I think he's making a problem where there isn't one."